

ReZero Extra: Withdrawal Symptoms

Speaker Colors: Subaru, Ram, Rem, Emilia, etc.

----Three days have passed since the Demon Beast Forest incident and Subaru's promise with Emilia. On this fateful morning,

“----No more. I'm at my limits here. I can't stand this. Send me back home!”

With a cry of pure anguish, Subaru pounds the dining table and rises from his seat. His sudden outbursts shatter the peaceful breakfast atmosphere, causing everyone to turn toward him. With their curious gazes on him, Subaru wearily spreads his arms,

“Ahh, this is, the end.”

With a frail whisper, he drops his head into his hands and crumples backwards. As he plunges, Rem, who sat to his left, skillfully catches him. With perfect timing, she pulls back his chair and stops his descent,

“Please be careful, Subaru-kun. Rem will worry if Subaru-kun pushes himself too hard while recovering.”

Gently patting his slumped shoulders, Rem voices her devotion and concern. From behind, she affectionately traces a finger across his jawline. While Rem's skinship seems rather excessive, for the last few days, this has been the norm. After declaring that she would "see to Subaru-kun around the clock while he recovers," this level of intimacy was an everyday occurrence.

Despite the amorous touch of this beautiful maid, Subaru coldly unravels her finger from his chin. "No, no, no," he mutters, shaking his head weakly,

"That's not it.... this is way more serious."

Subaru gravely replies as his body collapses onto the table. Of course, he shoves away any stray dishes first. A calm Emilia, used to Subaru sitting next to her and causing such scenes, looks on with little urgency.

"Are you okay? Please tell me what's wrong. I'll do anything I can to help---- isn't that your line, Emilia-tan?"

"I'd tire myself out if I kept going along with Subaru like that. You know, if you do this too much, people will stop hearing you out."

"Sniff, so strict. But that cold side-face is cute too.... damnnit."

With his head still resting on the table, Subaru appeals with fluttering, upturned eyes. But Emilia ruthlessly cuts him down,

casually bringing some salad-like food to her mouth mid-conversation.

Seeing Subaru openly sulk, his face wrinkled with discontent, Rem energetically raises her hand,

“Yes, yes! Rem will listen to what Subaru-kun has to say. Rem will do it. Please order her. And when she succeeds, Rem doesn’t mind having her head petted, yes?”

“Praise me, praise me,” Rem seems to say, like a puppy excitedly wagging its tail. Smothered by the maid’s excessive appeals, Subaru further collapses onto the table, devolving into a shaky, mangled mess.

“But you know, you really do look like you’re struggling this time.”

Subaru’s face grows sickly and pale, sweat dripping readily from his forehead. Seeing this, even Emilia---- or rather, *especially* the softhearted Emilia, can’t help but show concern.

With his fingers shaking so violently atop the dining table, Subaru’s condition was clearly abnormal.

“Could it be, after-effects from the curse....”

Fearing the worst, Emilia and Rem look toward each other. Eyes clouded with concern, Emilia reaches into her silver hair, plucking out a small, grey-furred cat.

With two dainty fingers, she rests the sleepy spirit onto the table in front of Subaru. After briefly rubbing his eyes, Puck sniffs about with his small, pink nose,

“Hmm, it doesn’t seem like anything Lia needs to worry about? Subaru’s mana is exhausted, so his vitality is pretty low, but other than that it’s the same as always.”

Lightly slapping at Subaru’s face with his paws, Puck calmly reports back. Suddenly, Subaru’s shaky fingers extend toward him. With Puck trapped between the palms of Subaru’s hands, a **FLUFFING** session begins.

“Auauaaa---” Puck cries, but Emilia ignores him. With Subaru’s *Fluffist* rampage and Puck’s report, she breathes a deep sigh of relief.

But now they have no way to explain Subaru’s condition----

“Trembling fingertips, shallow breathing. My, it’s aaalmost as if he’s suffering from withdrawal. Possibly from some hiiighly addictive narcotic.”

As Emilia frowns in puzzlement, Roswaal, sitting at the head of table with a hand on his chin, takes a guess.

With a quick glance at Subaru’s condition, he pulls back his chin,

“Once a user stops taaaking such highly addictive substances, these sort of symptoms tend to occur. Of course, even in the royal capital, their use is increeedibly prohibited.”

“With no background, he was already suspicious. But to use illegal narcotics, Ram misjudged you, Barusu. Rem, move aside, your sister can’t kill him.”

“So you’re *immediately* doubting me, huh. Then again, I guess that’s the Ram-like thing to do here.”

Taking advantage of Roswaal’s deduction, Ram maliciously overreacts. Subaru smiles wryly, impressed that something drug-like exists even here. Though their treatment as taboo seems to be the same as well.

It goes without saying that, even in his own world, Subaru never lived such an ***underground*** lifestyle. At worst, he lived the ***underdog*** life of a lonely NEET.

Thus, such narcotics are unrelated to the state of Subaru’s body. Unrelated---- but the “withdrawal symptoms” Roswaal spoke of were an exceedingly good lead.

Truthfully, he does indeed suffer something like withdrawal.

Subaru’s body, his very *soul* yearns eternally for-

“....aise, I need it.”

Subaru mutters faintly, his right hand still skillfully *fluffing* Puck. Everyone’s eyes fall on the collapsed heap that is Subaru’s body.

The only one to barely hear him is the nearby Emilia. On his opposite side, Rem fails to hear because her head was tilted away. Dissatisfied, her lips curl into a small pout.

Oblivious to Rem's pouting, Emilia moves to catch Subaru's fleeting words. Bringing her ear towards his face, she strives to catch even the feeblest of breaths.

But, as if betraying her efforts, Subaru's eyes suddenly shine, and he flings himself up like a spring.

Shocked, a medley of different-colored eyes rise to meet him. Amongst them, Subaru screams to the heavens,

“----*MAYONNAISE, I **NEED** IT!!*”

With the appearance of this unknown word, the onlookers could only tilt their heads in confusion.

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----Natsuki Subaru is a genuine Mayo Lover.

[Mayo Lover], a venerable title granted only to those who love mayonnaise above all else. An army of culinary heretics, topping every food imaginable with mayonnaise is their ***justice***.

Adding mayonnaise---- commonly referred to as “mayo-ing,” came to the world alongside the title of “Mayo Lover,” ----is probably how it happened. By those lines, Natsuki Subaru is undoubtedly a true Mayo Lover.

His history with mayonnaise dates back as far as the lactation period. Alongside him, the entire Natsuki household is utterly enthralled by mayonnaise. To have a meal without bottles of it set aside is simply unimaginable.

Cramming the refrigerator with reserve mayonnaise was a given. Each member also marked their name on their own personal bottles. Slurping mayonnaise straight from the bottle after a bath, the so-called [Mayo-chuchu], was a daily occurrence as well.

Fried chicken with mayo. Salad with, of course, mayo. Gyoza and fries and dessert *all* with mayo. When you're troubled, add mayo. If you're bored, add mayo.

----As a proud, natural-born Mayo Lover, Natsuki Subaru lived by this code of conduct.

Subaru came to this parallel world roughly one week ago, ----though in his perspective, it has been almost a month. One whole month without this essential nutrient, his veritable soulmate.

Spirit wearing away, fingers trembling, tongue begging for oil and calories, eyesight blurry and failing---- these are the withdrawal symptoms of a Mayo Lover. They ruthlessly eat away at Subaru's body, forcefully dragging him deep into a sea of agony.

“And *that* is the White Lover---- Mayonnaise.”

So ends Subaru's tale of his long, long relationship with his [Lover].

To everyone who listened, he gives each a curt bow, then promptly collapses back into his chair. Overpowered by his incredible passion, they struggle to digest what had just occurred. The first to snap back to reality, Emilia crosses her arms,

“So.... basically, you're quibbling over a condiment you liked?”

“Emilia-tan, you just don't understand!!”

At her words, Subaru flies into a rage, slamming the table. Still firmly grasped in his hand, Puck lets out a shrill “munyaa---.” But with his emotions at a boil, Subaru fails to notice,

“To a Mayo Lover, even a day without mayonnaise is a glimpse of hell itself. And I've suffered twenty-.... no, a whole week of it. A normal person would've gone mad by now. It's only because of my inhuman mental fortitude that I've survived up until now, but.... I'm at my limits.”

“Ar-, aren't you just exaggerating? About going mad, and....”

“If I was acting, would my hands and feet be trembling like this....? Please believe me, Emilia-tan. Without mayonnaise, my body can't survive.”

It's commonly said that the oils in mayonnaise are akin to pure *endorphins*---- consuming this substance channels the purest of pleasures directly to the brain, giving birth to the Mayo Lover. Thus, Roswaal's guess was very close to the mark. To Subaru, quitting mayonnaise causes a strain not unlike withdrawal symptoms.

Pushed back by this unfamiliar seriousness, Emilia is at a loss for words. In front of her, Subaru had always maintained a frivolous attitude. That same Subaru now faces her as if his life is on the line. His intense passion, that unrivaled obsession, for laughing and trivializing them, Emilia feels greatly ashamed. She's fallen completely into the palm of his hand.

“Well, even without mayonnaise, food is still delicious, very delicious even. This thing that tastes like bread, and this soup-like liquid, that bowl of pseudo-salad, coupled with a dubiously water-ish beverage, it all tastes delicious, incredibly delicious---- but, it isn't mayonnaise.”

Pointing toward each item in their luxurious menu, an anguished Subaru cradles his head. His short hairs pierce at Puck, still trapped in his right hand. “*It's all prickly----*” he complains, but Subaru, lost deep in his sorrow, cannot hear him.

The greed of man knows no limits.

Since coming to this world, Subaru's only desire was for these peaceful days to continue. To stand at Emilia's side, to be surrounded by happy, smiling faces, to live each day peacefully

and uneventfully. Having desperately clawed beyond times of pain and despair, Subaru's inner NEET dreamed only of peace. But after overcoming crisis after crisis and reaching these precious days, an insatiable hunger overwhelms Subaru, screaming "it's not enough!"

Disgusting. This ruinous human greed, is utterly disgusting. Wasn't he supposed to be satisfied with these peaceful days? Those which he so desired, and then finally grasped. Satisfied with this gift, can't he just sink back into sloth and complacency?

----no, absolutely not.

As Subaru descends into a sea of laziness, a booming voice calls out to him. He wonders whose it is, only to realize that it is his own. Within his heart, passionately, powerfully, violently, the voice echos. "Now," it cries, pushing onward the stalled Subaru,

Advance, advance, advance---- toward an insatiable greed. Onward, onward, onward---- past the coveted days you strived to claim, go forth beyond and aim for more.

Thus, Natsuki Subaru's pursuit continues. After escaping the endless loop of deaths, saving the twins and Roswaal from disaster, and reaching the promised date with Emilia. Now is the time to dream a new dream.

“I was aimless, goalless, lacking a purpose in life. But now, this is my new dream.... That is, to bring mayonnaise to this world. What’s, wrong, with, that.”

To bring the *white fairy* to the dinner table, that is Subaru’s new purpose. Carefully listening to his quietly burning passion, the one to rise up and meet him is,

“Understood. Subaru-kun’s request, please leave it to Rem.”

Blue hair waving about, eyes sparkling like jewels, Rem comes to his call. Lately, she carries out absolutely any request Subaru asks of her. Out of gratitude, and probably for a slew of other reasons, she simply will not abandon Subaru in his time of need.

“In the first place, the task of managing the manor’s kitchen falls to Rem. If Rem’s cooking can’t satisfy Subaru-kun, it’s Rem’s duty to take appropriate measures. ----isn’t that right?”

“You.... will you do this with me, Rem!”

Subaru’s wet eyes look up toward Rem. Assuring him, she spreads her arms,

“Let us do it, Subaru-kun. Now, about the recipe....”

“----eh?”

“----eh?”

Facing each other, Rem and Subaru freeze solid.
Their jaws slacked open, they stare back at each other like fools.

Between Subaru's hand and the dining table, the squashed mass
that is Puck protests,

"It's too heavy---"

In the cold silence of the dining hall, his grumbling is the only
sound to be heard.

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"“Oh, my body can't survive without it,' he says. Such big talk
without even knowing the recipe. How appalling.”"

"I won't deny that. But as I was saying, do you perfectly
understand *your* favorite dish's recipe? Don't change the topic on
me.”"

"Ram's favorites are everything Rem makes. And since Rem
knows the recipes, Ram doesn't need to. It's different from Barusu
and that mayo-whatever that nobody's heard of.”"

Shortly after breakfast, in the now empty dining hall.
While clearing the dining table, Subaru and Ram engage back
and forth in something that doesn't quite amount to an argument.

Subaru retrieves the tableware, passing it to Ram who stands behind him with a cart. In contrast to his abnormally slow pace, she transfers the tableware to the cart with a trained hand. Yet, despite their difference in speed, Ram waits on him without complaint.

Objectively, their routine was terribly inefficient, but this was part of Subaru's rehabilitation. In fact, Ram herself volunteered to assist Subaru's work.

After recovering, Subaru would eventually be reinstated as a servant of the Roswaal Manor. By taking on simple chores everyday, he'd grow accustomed to the work and acclimate back to health. This was his duty for the past few days.

Originally, Rem grandly declared herself as Subaru's aide. However, since work would be delayed all throughout the manor, she was instantly rejected.

In comparison to Ram, setting Rem aside as Subaru's aide would be devastating. Considering she manages roughly 90% of the work, the loss of her fighting potential would be like running the manor at 10%. To no one's surprise, her request was immediately shot down.

"If only she was more self-aware about that. It'd definitely help her self-esteem."

Wiping down the dining table, Subaru laments with a light sigh.

The manor depends on Rem for the majority of its chores. Though Ram doesn't slack off either, there exists an undeniable difference in ability.

And yet, Rem's self-deprecating nature refuses to change. In a sense, her self-worth comes not from within, but from others---- with Subaru as the main provider, as of late. Though her praise-seeking behavior could be seen as a sort of progress.

“Then again, the 24/7 barrage of [How is it?], [Did Rem do well?], [It isn't strange, is it?], [Is it tasty, Subaru-kun?], [Rem doesn't mind being praised, yes?], [Praise me, praise me, praise me] is really wearing me out.”

Though Subaru himself allowed it, the weight with which Rem leans on him is immense and crushing.

After keeping to herself for so long, Rem was like an explosion. Subaru just hopes that, like an explosion, her extreme forwardness will be a brief phase. If this goes on for much longer, with his body still recovering, he'd stand no chance. Be that as it may, Subaru can't just bluntly shake Rem off, especially since his feelings for her have started to bloom.

“....That child's stubborn inferiority complex is dyed straight into the wool. It must be from our childhood, when Ram was a bit too much of a prodigy.”

“Isn't it a bit much to call yourself a prodigy, especially in the past tense? How big-headed does someone need to be to make a claim like that?”

“If Ram was still in her prime, everything above Barusu’s neck would be gone by now.... Honestly, why does Ram have to hang her hopes on a man like Barusu.”

Ram sighs wearily. Tilting his head at her words, Subaru seeks an explanation. With a particularly disgusted look, she side-glances back,

“Up until now, all that existed in Rem’s world was Ram, Roswaal-sama, and the manor. While Emilia-sama and Beatrice-sama were in her scope as well, she probably didn’t attach much importance to them. As for anyone else, all the more.”

“Hmm, yeah, Rem does seem to have that kind of narrow-mindedness.”

This narrow-mindedness also explains why she rashly jumps to conclusions.

Secluded from the world, Rem resolves her problems internally, deciding everything by herself. As a victim of that dangerous thought process, this analysis is deeply etched in Subaru’s mind. Looking back, he laments his poor conduct from that time.

“What are you staring at Ram for?”

“Why don’t you figure it out for yourself, Nee-sama.”

“Stop looking at Ram with those perverted eyes. We’re the same in terms of looks, so just do what you want with Rem instead.”

“That beautiful, sisterly love of yours isn’t beautiful at all, is it!”

“Well, putting that aside for now.”

Skillfully ignoring Subaru’s shouts, Ram swipes the cloth out from his hand. With a swift motion, she usurps his role and begins cleaning.

Subaru’s arm had given out from exhaustion some time ago. He tried to keep talking as an excuse for a break, but Ram saw through him. Feeling somewhat guilty, Subaru turns away from her as she works,

“So, what was that thing you were talking about?”

“Asking for an answer that you already know, Ram thinks that’s quite malicious.”

“Wouldn’t it be bad if we misunderstand each other? After all, it’s an established fact that I’m an oblivious guy who couldn’t read emotions to save his life. I’m *Round Table* class.

Though she doesn’t quite understand, Ram responds with a long sigh. Murmuring, she continues,

“----Rem’s small, narrow world, like a contamination, Barusu forced his way into it. If that contamination rampages enough, the

walls of that child's small world might push out just a bit. So dreams a beautiful girl named Ram."

"Careful, that act of yours is starting to resemble me a bit too much. ----Also, those dreams or whatever, don't dump them onto me like that. I only do what I can, and sometimes I don't even do *that*."

Subaru's motto is "To do or not to do? If you can't decide, then don't do anything."

With this as his personal creed, he allowed countless potential events to slip past him. Subaru boasts his uselessness with a triumphant smirk. But with a curt "hmph," Ram coolly scorns back,

"Unable to abandon the village children, much less leave Rem behind. And in the end, becoming a decoy to let Ram and Rem escape. Trying to act tough after all that, my, it gives Ram goosebumps."

"Stop spelling out my deeds! Looking back, I'm so embarrassed, I could explode! Ugh, seriously, what's wrong with me. I must've let the tension get to my head. That's not me, goddamnit...."

Thinking back on his actions, a bashful Subaru crouches and furiously shakes his head. Though he managed to break out from the endless loops of death for the second time, Subaru was baffled by his various doings. *Who is this crazy, hot-blooded youth*, he asks, goosebumps forming all over.

“For the **cool** and **gallant** Natsuki Subaru, it’s just unbecoming. If I’d heroically taken care of everything myself, it’d be another story. But didn’t I just blow black smoke everywhere and let Ros-chi handle the rest!?”

“Well, logically speaking, that is how it was.”

“I knew it! I tried so hard too, damnit!”

After countless loops, this was the end result.

In reaching that result though, Subaru undoubtedly struggled. Yet, with no one aware of his suffering, everyone probably thinks “Oh, he just got involved by chance or something.”

Moreover, without landing a decisive blow of any sort, Subaru’s role amounts to “that guy who was just sort of there by chance.” Most of all----,

“Barusu was there. Sometimes that alone can save someone. You should know that.”

Soft, gentle words spill from Ram’s lips. Without her usual cynicism, nor any callous hatred, her words carried a genuine warmth and kindness. However-,

“Now that I think about it, that time with Reinhard, wasn’t I useless back then too!? Shielding Emilia-tan at the very end, was that all I did? Plus, that’s just being a meat tank. Even *Rom-jii* could’ve done that! I’m in despair----!”

Unfortunately, Ram's words fail to reach Subaru as he grieves over his paltry achievements. Hanging his head, he sighs as if the world itself was ending. With an unpleasant scowl, Ram lets loose an explosive low kick, buckling his legs and sending him to the floor. Looking down at Subaru, Ram seems annoyed enough to spit on him,

“As expected, hanging any hope on a failure like Barusu is a lost cause.”

“So harsh! Well, I guess you're not wrong though? But I wouldn't mind if you had at least a little hope in me.”

Met with her hard stare, he snaps his fingers, then shapes them like pistols and playfully shoots at Ram. Blowing out the imaginary smoke wafting from his fingers,

“Expanding worlds or whatever, instead of relying on some stranger, you should do that yourself. Besides, being secluded in this cramped mansion, aren't you the same as Rem? Boasting about your [Clairvoyance] when you don't even know the names of the local village brats, what a joke.”

“....what are you-”

“You and Rem, your scopes are both too narrow. All you two ever do is look to each other for anything and everything. If you've gotta be together, instead of staring at each other, try walking

alongside each other. That's definitely more constructive and worthwhile."

As Ram sinks into silence, Subaru snaps his fingers and flashes a bright smile. Adjusting the angle, he strikes his best pose,

"How's that. Did my speech manage to convince you?"

"Enough that it's unimaginable for Barusu and the person who cried over a condiment to be one and the same."

So harsh, Subaru thinks, laughing bitterly. He takes a look around the hall,

"Well, let's take our time with this. I'm sure Rem will eventually come around. After thinking and worrying for a while.... one day, when she stops to look carefully, she'll realize that compared to herself, Nee-sama's totally inferior."

"....yes. Ram hopes that day comes soon."

With his teasing unexpectedly met with agreement, Subaru involuntarily falters. There wasn't a hint of bluffing or falseness in her words. Ram spoke from her heart.

"What are you going to do if that day actually comes?"

"Even then, as the elder sister, Ram is to be respected. ----That alone will never change."

Hearing her refreshing declaration, Subaru decides not to press any further. Though he feels he's been sticking his neck where it doesn't belong since quite a while ago, he shoves the thought away.

Subaru sees that she's finished working. He's forced to recognize that, in the end, Ram took on the brunt of the work. Subaru's recovery still has a ways to go. As for hiding his weakness, even more so.

“I can't let Emilia-tan and Rem see me like this afterall.”

He doesn't want the former to see his weakness. He doesn't want the latter to feel guilt and indebtedness. Both feelings stem from his stubbornness as a man. “To do or not to do? Stop worrying and just do it,” he decides.

“Although, as her older sister, Ram isn't happy with Barusu's mayo-whatever adding to Rem's workload.”

“Right now, Rem's goals are all fuzzy and vague, so she's trying too hard in every direction. She'll overwork herself and collapse at this rate. But if we give her just one clear goal, she'll be able to focus her efforts on it. Rem's got tunnel vision afterall.”

While seemingly calm and collected, once she sets her heart on something, Rem singlemindedly pursues it.

Right now, her mind is undoubtedly stuck on completing Subaru's fabled condiment. With a lowered focus on her other tasks, hopefully Rem will unconsciously ease up on herself.

Ram looks genuinely impressed with his answer, her eyebrows raised high,

“How surprising for Barusu to think so far. And even spout all that nonsense.”

“If you're going to praise me, could you at least put some feeling into it!? Besides, right now, my soul yearns for the [White Lover].
----For both Rem and I, isn't this plan a **Win-Win**?”

“Uin-Uin?”

As Subaru twists his body about, chanting “Win-Win,” a rare look of bewilderment emerges on Ram's face.

Without having to worry about indebtedness or weakness or any special care, for Subaru, talking with Ram is refreshingly easy. Enjoying their conversation amidst a comfortable weariness, Subaru pushes his weight off from the dining table,

“Okay, on to the next task. Let's see----”

With the dining hall cleaned up, for now they could go help Rem.
----At that moment, the doors to the dining hall fling open.

“Subaru-kun! Nee-sama!”

Beyond the doors, Rem's face shines with a brilliant smile. Short of breath, her shoulders swaying, Rem looks around the clean dining hall and nods excitedly,

"It appears the dining hall is all tidied up. ----In that case, we've finished our work for the morning."

Usually, their morning work would take almost two more hours. Yet Rem declares that they're already done. Imagining her lightning-fast pace, Subaru and Ram can't help but look on in shock. In front of them, Rem smiles, arms widely stretched out,

"Well then, let us immediately start on Subaru-kun's [mayanaize]! Rem worked hard, so we can try many times before lunch!"

In high spirits, the blue-haired girl claps with delight. Poking out above her radiant smile, beside her white headdress, lies a brilliantly pure white horn.

"To make her use her Oni transformation.... weren't you trying to *stop* her from overworking."

"Hey, the way you brought her up isn't blameless either."

Staring each other down, Subaru and Ram maliciously point out the other's mistakes. Watching over them, a curious Rem tilts her head.

Atop her tilted head, Rem's white horn glistens brilliantly with the sun's morning rays.